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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION

The present document reports on and analyses major new trends and developments of UNICEF programme cooperation in the West and Central Africa region during 1990.

The UNICEF regional office has responsibility for UNICEF cooperation in the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zaire.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In a number of countries in the West and Central Africa region, the past year was marked by growing trends toward multi-party political systems. Possibly given impetus by the changes in Eastern Europe, opposition parties were or are in the process of being legalized in Benin, Chad, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, the Niger, Togo and Zaire. The declaration of the Government of France at the Sixteenth Conference of French and African Heads of State in La Baule, France, in June 1990, that its future assistance would be contingent upon progress towards democratization helped to make the idea more acceptable to the parties in power.

2. Following the outbreak of civil war in Liberia at the end of 1989, over 600,000 refugees fled to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. In Liberia itself, over 745,000 people were said to be without adequate food, water, shelter or medical care. UNICEF is cooperating with other members of the United Nations system and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to alleviate the plight of refugees, in particular Liberian children, who have been severely traumatized by this immense human tragedy.

3. Because of insufficient rainfall in August 1990 in parts of the Sahel, the food security situation is expected to worsen, requiring additional external food aid. With economic growth insufficient to offset population growth, in addition to the persisting problem of debt, there are indications of additional hardships for the most vulnerable population groups.

4. The African Development Bank (AfDB) and UNICEF held their first consultative meeting at Abidjan in May 1990. The discussions centred on areas such as operational modalities of cooperation, joint implementation of the Bamako Initiative and collaboration in addressing the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The regional office will continue to urge AfDB and Governments to direct a larger proportion of Bank assistance to social programmes.

5. African countries played a crucial role in the realization of the World Summit for Children, which was first supported by the Conference of French and African Heads of State held at Dakar in 1988, and subsequently endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in May 1990 and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July 1990. Eight West African heads of State or Government attended the Summit, with all other countries of the region represented either by Foreign Ministers or ambassadors.

I. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

6. In most countries of the region, recent data on infant, under-five and maternal mortality rates are still scarce and often inaccurate, thus requiring frequent use of projections in order to assess trends. Information on the prevalence of specific diseases for which control or elimination programmes

are under way is becoming increasingly available, however. For example, a sharp decrease in measles morbidity and mortality has been reported by most countries with high vaccination coverage. Results of national case searches for dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) will soon be available for all endemic countries in the region. Additional efforts, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), are planned to establish a basic information system for food and nutrition surveillance.

7. Cape Verde, the Congo and the Gambia have already reached universal child immunization (UCI), and at least five other countries are expected to attain 75 per cent vaccination coverage this year. Regional coverage is expected to average over 50 per cent for three doses of combined diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine. Since the beginning of its acceleration just four years ago, the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) has managed to multiply coverage four times. Efforts are being made to improve further all aspects of EPI management. Strengthening epidemiological surveillance will become one of the priority areas for UNICEF support in the 1990s.

8. An intensive process of evaluation, involving all countries in the region except Liberia, was begun in November 1990. Coverage surveys will be carried out in 20 countries in close collaboration with two subregional technical organizations, as well as other partners, particularly WHO and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In Ghana and Sierra Leone, the evaluation will rely on well-established routine monitoring systems.

9. The Bamako Initiative is now increasingly promoted and formulated in the context of country programmes. At present, a major concern is progressively to build a coherent framework to rationalize, integrate, expand and sustain existing individual maternal and child health interventions such as EPI, control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD), control of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) and maternal care. Furthermore, greater popular participation in the assessment and resolution of health problems is expected to be a key contribution to reaching the health goals of the 1990s. While the objective of "going national" remains a priority, experience in the region has demonstrated the need to implement the Bamako Initiative strategy initially in selected areas, in view of the number and complexity of epidemiological and managerial issues.

10. Common constraints identified to date in developing the Bamako Initiative in the region include slow progress in policy formulation and effective implementation on essential drugs, decentralization and community financing; the difficulty of upgrading the first referral level; the scarcity of foreign exchange; and pressing issues related to staff management, such as grossly insufficient remuneration and lack of incentives, difficulty of filling posts in remote areas and generally poor performance. UNICEF is working closely with all partners to develop models for sustainable health service financing and management and for community organization, with special focus on capacity-building at all levels.

11. The situation in the region with regard to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) has continued to worsen, with the total number of confirmed cases steadily increasing in some countries by more than 100 per cent in comparison to the previous year. This more likely reflects both an increase in real incidence and an improvement of epidemiological surveillance, however. The Fifth International Conference on AIDS in Africa was held at Kinshasa in October 1990. At the workshop for national AIDS coordinators at the WHO Regional Office at Brazzaville, which discussed the integration of AID coordinators into national primary health care programmes, UNICEF presented a summary of its AIDS-control activities.

12. Although the targets of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) were not reached, countries in the region are adjusting their strategies according to the lessons learned during the 1980s. The application of low-cost technologies such as gravity spring systems in Nigeria and hand-dug wells in Sierra Leone and Zaire, with full community participation, helps to make greater use of financial resources. As valuable members of village health committees, women are becoming increasingly involved with water supply and sanitation issues.

13. At the Third African Conference on Dracunculiasis held in Côte d'Ivoire in March 1990, strategic project options to achieve eradication of the disease in the region by 1995 were reviewed. Benin, Burkina Faso and Cameroon have undertaken surveys to localize populations at risk. In Togo, UNICEF is cooperating in the process of developing village epidemiological surveillance systems.

14. Following the World Conference on Education for All, the regional office is increasing support to country offices to ensure that Conference recommendations are fully reflected in future country programmes. A new post of regional adviser in education has been recommended. At the regional representatives' meeting, strategies were discussed to operationalize education for all in the region. The Governments of Ghana and Nigeria are giving substantial support to early child care and development education. In most countries, NGOs are actively implementing early childhood development activities, but these could be more closely associated with UNICEF-assisted programmes. Country offices in the region will continue to advocate the establishment of national policies and the development of programmes in this sector.

15. Women's concerns are now taken fully into account at each step of the country programming exercise as a matter of course. In order to be able to participate fully in the development process, women need to be given appropriate tools such as increased access to production credits and basic education. A regional workshop held with government counterparts on the issue of women in development recommended that women be seen as a priority group in national development through (a) more equitable access to education for young girls; (b) the establishment of social support structures, such as child-care facilities, to facilitate training for women; and (c) the promotion of training and information-sharing among decision makers.

16. By extending full support to the country programming exercise, improving the quality of programmes in the region will remain the highest priority of the regional office, with focus on translating the Declaration of the World Summit for Children into practical actions for children within the country context.

II. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

17. Throughout the year, most advocacy efforts were geared towards supporting ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the largest possible number of countries in the region. Ghana was the first country in the world to do so. A total of 12 West and Central African States have now ratified the Convention and several others are in the process of doing so. The Convention will remain the region's primary instrument of advocacy to safeguard the principle of "first call for children", which has been unanimously accepted by African States in the designation by OAU of the 1990s as the Decade of the African Child.

18. In support of the World Summit for Children, a series of social mobilization campaigns was conducted throughout the region, including mini-summits and national seminars in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone; children's days in Côte d'Ivoire and the Congo; and symposia of artists, intellectuals and communicators in Benin and the Congo. National committees for children were created in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone, and are expected to become powerful voices.

19. Advocacy with parliamentarians gained momentum with the Africa Parliamentary Workshop, held at Banjul in December 1990, on the theme of survival, protection and development of children. In considering the legal status and protection of children in West African countries, the meeting recommended a greater advocacy role for African parliamentarians in order to ensure that promises made to children at the Summit are kept.

20. Facts for Life significantly strengthened social mobilization support to UNICEF-assisted programmes in the region, successfully disseminating health messages to a larger public, with rural radio fast becoming a major channel. In Cape Verde, Facts for Life is applied to literacy projects and serves as a training manual for health workers; in Nigeria, it was adapted in four national languages; and in Sierra Leone, the UNICEF office produced a variety of Facts for Life messages through its own desk-top publishing system.

III. OPERATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

21. Country offices continued to experience long delays in filling vacant posts, adversely affecting programme implementation. In addressing this issue, the Division of Personnel, the Africa Section and the regional office have agreed to have a recruitment drive early in 1991. Coordination of regional administrative issues was enhanced when the post of regional operations officer was filled earlier in the year.

22. More offices are faced with the problem of inadequate office premises. In Burkina Faso and Ghana, construction is under way on Government-donated land. The Governments of Benin and the Gambia have donated land to the United Nations for the construction of joint premises. The Guinea office will move into new office space in 1991.

23. Land-locked countries in the region are still facing delays in the delivery of supplies and excessive costs because of transit operations. In Douala, Cameroon, a major transshipment port, the UNICEF office, in collaboration with the Supply Division Warehouse, is currently studying cost-saving measures through the establishment of joint clearing facilities with other United Nations agencies.

24. Training activities continued to expand in 1990. Regional workshops were organized on programming and evaluation, training of trainers, finance and budget, training as a component of programmes benefiting women, children in especially difficult circumstances and CDD. With the availability of extensive training materials developed by the Training Section, several country offices increased in-house training, which is expected to assume an even wider dimension in the future.

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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN REGION

The present document highlights and analyses the main events and new trends in the Americas and Caribbean region that have affected UNICEF programme cooperation during 1990.

The UNICEF regional office for the Americas and Caribbean has responsibility for cooperation in the following countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay and Venezuela.

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I. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

A. Achievements and challenges

1. Despite the region's long-standing and emerging structural difficulties, strides were made in almost every country towards establishing and consolidating democratic Governments, with the elections in Nicaragua and Haiti in 1990 being recent examples of this trend.

2. The region's chronic poverty and growing unrest, however, pose threats to the process of democratization in the long term. New Governments are assuming power at a time when the significant reductions in resources for social development plans and programmes undermine their ability to meet the development challenges they face. In addition, the growing level of open violence, particularly in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru, is a further challenge to the region. The survival of both new and established Governments is made precarious when conflicting factions, social groups and Governments themselves, inflamed by external interventions, resort to violence rather than dialogue to solve problems.

3. Despite the many constraints, political will and commitment to the needs of children have remained very high this past year, bolstered by intense and varied advocacy actions at the country level on two global initiatives: the Convention on the Rights of the Child, already ratified by 16 countries in the region; and the World Summit for Children. The region's representation at the Summit was notable: 25 per cent of all Heads of State or Government attending the Summit were from the region, an area with only approximately 10 per cent of the world's population. Post-Summit actions by Governments have also been encouraging. Although the heads of State of Bolivia, Cuba and Ecuador did not attend the Summit, they subsequently endorsed and signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, reaffirming their support for the World Declaration, indicated their readiness to commit the resources necessary to guarantee child development at a meeting in Caracas in October 1990.

B. Emerging trends

4. Taking advantage of the process of democratization in the region, UNICEF offices have increased their advocacy efforts on behalf of children and women among parliamentarians and some national institutions in the region. Some successes have been achieved in this regard, and the experience gained should be valuable in the future.

5. Decentralization, a development that has arisen partly in response to democratization and partly owing to the decline in resources available for public spending, is creating new opportunities for the participation and mobilization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector at the grass-roots level, usually collectively referred to in the region as

sociedad civil. The challenge now for Governments is to sustain the participation and mobilization of such groups by ensuring that they are included in social planning and in the formulation of legislation.

6. The Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office organized a meeting of all country representatives and senior headquarters staff in Portillo, Chile, early in 1990 to formulate specific strategies for achieving UNICEF corporate goals in the region. The resulting Portillo document, together with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Summit Declaration, express the guiding focus of UNICEF operations, goals and commitments in the region. In this regard, the Governments of Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela have already initiated actions to implement the goals and monitor the progress achieved. Concomitantly, the ministers of health and education of all Central American countries, responding to the dynamics set in motion, particularly at the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, met in Punta Arenas, Costa Rica, to work towards the same ends. In brief, the region is passing from the stage of declaration to action in its attempts to comply with the goals of the year 2000.

7. An important response to initiatives already undertaken by Governments in the region will be UNICEF support for monitoring activities, including the identification of social indicators, the formulation of appropriate methodologies for monitoring and evaluation and the dissemination of results. In this regard, the Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office has already included activities on education, nutrition and monitoring and evaluation in the regional work plan for 1991 and in scheduled staff development workshops. Similarly, UNICEF will seek to include a monitoring component in the maternal and child health (MCH) plans of action that will be prepared by all countries of the region in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

II. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

8. Economic conditions in the region remain bleak. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated a cumulative decrease equivalent to 9.6 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) per capita during the years 1981-1990. This decline occurred during conditions of high inflation, a net transfer of resources to industrialized countries and adjustment measures that significantly reduced fiscal resources. The external debt of the countries of the region totals $423 billion and, for the ninth consecutive year, the region was a net exporter of capital - $18.9 billion in 1990 alone. The result of those developments has been an average cumulative reduction in consumption equivalent to 13 per cent, with purchasing capacity among the poorest groups falling to an even more critical level.

9. As a result, social sector budgets have shrunk alarmingly in some countries. For example, the Minister of Planning in Peru indicated that some 75 per cent of resources that would otherwise be allocated to social sector

needs have been shifted to cover debt-related measures and counter-violence activities.

10. In response to the social and economic crises they face, some countries have created "social investment funds", with the objective of alleviating the adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and deteriorating economic conditions on the most vulnerable sections of their populations.

11. However, economic and social vulnerability continues to be the condition of millions of people in the region, with chronic poverty affecting some 270 million people (62 per cent of the region's population). The situation is not expected to improve during the 1990s despite the fact that GNP is anticipated to increase moderately. The World Bank World Development Report 1990 projected that the GNP growth rate in developing countries as a whole could increase to 5.1 per cent. In Latin American countries, however, the growth rate is projected to reach only 2.3 per cent. It should be noted that these projections were made before the crisis resulting from the situations between Iraq and Kuwait.

III. HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME, EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

A. Child survival

12. If no substantive deterioration in current social and political conditions occurs, the goal of universal child immunization (UCI) is expected to be achieved by the end of 1991 in 19 countries. A further 10 countries will have to make special efforts to achieve the goal and 5 countries will not achieve it. However, the region is on the verge of reaching the goal of polio eradication: during 1990, only 10 cases of wild polio virus were confirmed. In reaching this stage, a key role was played at regional and country levels by the Inter-agency Coordinating Committee, whose members include PAHO/World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Rotary International and UNICEF. The success of the approach has prompted a similar effort in the control of diarrhoeal diseases. The formulation of phase II of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) (1991-1995) is a new challenge facing both the countries of the region and UNICEF, in which success will be measured by decreases in the rates of vaccine-preventable diseases rather than by the percentages of children immunized. An evolution of child survival and development (CSD) initiatives towards more comprehensive MCH/primary health care programmes (PHC) has also been observed in the region.

B. Child development and basic education

13. In preparation for the World Conference on Education for All, the countries of the region met at Quito, in November 1989, where they emphasized the need for early childhood development to occupy an important place in all

basic education strategies. This emphasis was reaffirmed by the Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office during a meeting held in Portillo, Chile, in early 1990, in which it was adopted as part of the UNICEF strategy for comprehensive child development in the region. Bearing in mind the importance of early childhood development, UNICEF will increase efforts to develop more integrated, intersectoral programmes, with the participation of the education, health and nutrition sectors.

14. Other important and related goals will be to reduce repetition rates in the first two grades of primary school and to improve the quality and efficiency of primary schools. Some countries of the region have already taken action to implement those goals by requesting UNICEF support in such areas in their country programme submissions to the 1991 session of the UNICEF Executive Board.

C. Children in especially difficult circumstances

15. All countries of the region are conducting situation analyses to ascertain the number and the problems of children in especially difficult circumstances, as well as the number of those at risk, using a methodology created for the region. The research will be used to promote national policies, to mobilize both national and external resources and to increase public awareness of the problem and commitment to solve it. This focus on research and policy formulation reinforces the open and human approach that 16 countries in the region have successfully implemented in dealing with the problems of children in especially difficult circumstances. Because effective programmes for assisting working and street children have already been initiated in most countries of the region, future actions will target those children not yet covered by existing programmes.

D. Women in development

16. According to ECLAC estimates, 140 million women live in poverty in the region. An important activity in 14 countries of the region in the past year, therefore, has been to call the attention of the public and policy makers to the situation of women through research studies describing their problems and through programme activities to help to generate income and improve their health and educational status. Four successful models for women's development have been identified in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico. These case studies will be documented to help to stimulate their replication in other countries of the region.

17. To coordinate women's development activities at the country level, some Governments have established advisory groups, and five have created women's bureaux. UNICEF has been advised that nine more Governments expect to open similar bureaux. An attempt will be made to create a network of women's offices to coordinate the efforts of the Governments of the region and to facilitate the exchange of experiences among them. Special collaboration will

be established with subregional parliamentarian groups, as well as with other United Nations organizations such as ECLAC, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

E. The Catholic Church

18. Cooperation has been established with the Catholic Church in Argentina, the Dominican Republic and Peru. An agreement was also signed between Catholic Relief Services, the Latin American Bishops' Council and UNICEF to initiate a regional research project on child-rearing practices and patterns, with financial support from the World Bank's Special Adjustment Facility for Latin American and the Caribbean (SAFLAC). The results of this study will be discussed in the General Assembly of Latin American Bishops to be held in 1992.

F. External relations

19. External relations activities in the region have been largely confined to promoting both public and governmental awareness of the World Conference on Education for All, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children. A special advocacy effort was made among presidential candidates in seven countries to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child development.

G. Management

20. In compliance with an Executive Board recommendation, the Americas and the Caribbean Regional Office and the office for Bogota and Venezuela were separated during 1990, and a representative for Colombia and Venezuela has been appointed. It has also been proposed in the biennial budget for 1992-1993 that the Executive Board create sub-offices in Argentina and Venezuela and upgrade the Nicaragua office to the level of country office.

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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN THE EAST ASIA AND PAKISTAN REGION AND CHINA

The present document analyses major new trends and developments of UNICEF programme cooperation in the East Asia and Pakistan region and China during 1990.

The UNICEF regional office has responsibility for UNICEF cooperation in the following countries and territories: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and the countries in the Pacific region (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). The UNICEF office at Beijing is responsible for programme cooperation in China.

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I. EAST ASIA AND PAKISTAN REGION

A. Regional overview

1. Over the last decade, most developing countries of the East Asia and Pakistan region have shown a high level of political commitment to improving services to children and women. During 1990, this led to continued improvements in their health and educational status. However, economic instability exacerbated by the Persian Gulf crisis, together with rapid urbanization, increased numbers of female-headed households, environmental degradation and inequity in access to services pose serious challenges for the future.

2. Economic growth has been strong in many countries. The Thai economy achieved an annual growth rate of 11.7 per cent during the 1987-1989 period. Malaysia had 7.6 per cent growth for 1989 and the Republic of Korea anticipates 9.7 per cent growth for 1990. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Viet Nam all recorded growth rates of over 5 per cent for 1989. Rapid increases in agricultural output in Bangladesh have led to significant economic recovery and to gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 5.5 per cent for 1990 compared to 2 per cent per annum for the previous two years.

3. Inflation continues to be a major problem in the region. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam, it was reported at between 40 and 70 per cent for 1989-1990. Because of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, most other countries are beginning to experience severe inflationary pressures. Those likely to be most severely affected are Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

4. External debt and debt servicing remain major concerns in the region. The Philippines continues to pay over 40 per cent of its national budget for debt servicing, although in 1990, the level of debt was reduced from $29 billion to $27.2 billion through debt restructuring. Myanmar continues to experience high levels of debt and limited access to bilateral donor assistance.

5. Despite economic growth in much of the region and overall improvements in children's and women's health and educational status, income distribution and access to services remain highly inequitable, with disproportionate numbers of women and children among the poorest of the poor. Although per capita income has risen in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand, the number of very poor households has increased significantly, and the lowest income groups have been unable to improve their quality of life.

B. Programme progress and trends

Child survival and development priorities

6. There have been considerable improvements in child survival and development in the region, with all countries reporting increased immunization coverage with anti-tuberculosis vaccine, three doses of combined diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine, three doses of oral polio vaccine, two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine and measles vaccine. The availability and use of oral rehydration salts (ORS) has increased throughout the region, with several countries becoming self-sufficient in ORS production. Safe motherhood policies have been initiated in almost all countries in the region. Infant mortality rates (IMRs) continued to decline, with the Republic of Korea reducing its IMR to 10 per 1,000 live births, a rate lower than that of some developed nations.

7. Universal child immunization (UCI) has now been reached by the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Viet Nam, the Marshall Islands and five other Pacific island nations. Malaysia is close to reaching the target, and Pakistan was making great efforts to achieve UCI by the end of 1990. Impressive improvements in coverage under the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) were noted in Bangladesh, and improvements were also noted in Cambodia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Almost all countries in the region have strengthened their health delivery systems through immunization programmes, thus presenting potential opportunities for the implementation of other maternal and child health (MCH) programmes in the coming years.

8. All countries in the region have now initiated programmes for the control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD), which undertake training in case management, programme management and supervision, research into access and use of ORS, production and supply of ORS and information, education and communication support for CDD. UNICEF has also supported the establishment of diarrhoea training units. Attempts are being made throughout the region to integrate CDD activities within broader MCH and water supply and sanitation initiatives. In Pakistan, the national diarrhoea treatment policy emphasizes prevention through the promotion of breast-feeding, measles immunization and hygiene education.

9. Access to ORS has improved in most countries and it is estimated that ORS is available to 65 per cent of households in the region - a dramatic increase from 5 per cent in 1982. The overall rate of usage is still low, however.

10. Acute respiratory infections (ARI) are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the region, accounting for 25 per cent of all deaths of children under the age of five years. Approximately 40 per cent of all paediatric hospital consultations and 10 per cent of hospital admissions are ARI-related.

11. Programmes for the prevention and control of ARI are in progress in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar,

Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam and are now expanding rapidly. In the Philippines, it was planned to "go to scale" during 1990. In Thailand, the programme has expanded from 13 to 35 provinces, and in Viet Nam, the programme now reaches 37 provinces.

Nutrition

12. The rate of malnutrition among children is declining slowly in most countries in the region. In the Philippines, the percentage of underweight schoolchildren was reduced from 17.2 per cent in 1982 to 13.9 per cent in 1990. Thailand reduced the rate of protein-energy malnutrition among infants and young children from 51 per cent in 1982 to 20 per cent in 1989.

13. Throughout 1990, the major nutritional activities were growth monitoring, community nutrition education and the promotion of breast-feeding and national and household food security. Family food production, using bio-intensive methods, is being extensively practised in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, the countries of the Pacific and Viet Nam. Throughout the region considerable work has yet to be undertaken on the establishment of food and nutrition surveillance systems.

14. Growth monitoring and promotion remain an important focus of most nutrition programmes. On the other hand, the prevention and control of micronutrient deficiencies such as iodine deficiency disorders and vitamin A deficiencies also continue to be a priority. Treatment with high-potency vitamin A has been in progress in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Federated States of Micronesia and Viet Nam.

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

15. The number of people infected with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) increased dramatically in the region over the last year. There are 146 reported cases of full-blown AIDS in the region. In August 1989, 9,473 cases of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) had been reported for the region, but by August 1990, the figure had escalated to 20,604. The actual number of persons infected with HIV is known to be much higher than officially reported. Regional projections for the year 2000 suggest an infection level of 1.5 million people. The pattern of transmission is changing rapidly from homosexual men and intravenous drug users to heterosexual females, thus increasing the risks of perinatal AIDS. Most countries in the region have implemented short-term plans of action with assistance from various donors.

Safe motherhood, family planning and birth spacing

16. Although progress has been made throughout the region in improving maternal health, maternal mortality rates (MMRs) in South-East Asia remain high at 420 per 100,000 live births. Safe motherhood programmes have been initiated in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. In recognition of the fact that safe motherhood involves socio-economic and

cultural factors, interventions to promote safe motherhood have expanded to include female literacy and employment opportunities, as well as training for traditional birth attendants (TBAs).

Women's activities

17. UNICEF continued to support programmes of direct benefit to women and the integration of women's concerns into other sectoral programmes. Women's income-generating activities were supported in many countries in the region. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, women were trained in silkworm raising, textile weaving, animal raising and establishing rice banks. Landless women in Bangladesh were assisted by the Grameen Bank. In Papua New Guinea, a survey on women's income-generating activities was conducted. In Viet Nam, support was given to embroidery, sewing and dressmaking.

18. Skills training activities were supported in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea. In the Philippines, UNICEF supported training in new non-formal education methods for female functional literacy and leadership skills, and in Thailand in business skills.

19. Rural women in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Pakistan were provided with revolving loans. A major intersectoral initiative has been the focus on the girl child, especially in Bangladesh and Pakistan, while UNICEF has supported the Year of the Girl Child through workshops, seminars and the production of information and advocacy materials. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, women's unions have played an important role in supporting intersectoral women's activities, and in Thailand, the girl child is the major target for primary health care and the safe motherhood project.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

20. By late 1990, the Convention had been ratified by Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Viet Nam. It had been signed by the Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Samoa and Vanuatu.

21. The regional office supported the Government of Thailand in organizing a South-East Asia Meeting on the Rights of the Child in August 1990 at Bangkok. It was attended by representatives from 12 countries. The objectives of the meeting were to support the process of ratification at the national level, to plan for implementation and to identify useful regional networks for information and monitoring. The meeting concluded that the processes of ratification, implementation and monitoring of the Convention at the country level could be facilitated with improved access to information and technical advice and materials on the Convention. One of the recommendations was that a regional information network on the rights of the child should be established by the regional office to facilitate the exchange of experience and information.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

22. Working children, child abuse, child prostitution, street children and children affected by armed conflict are growing problems in many countries of the region. The media has raised public awareness of these programmes in Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand. Regional networks, supported by UNICEF, have made important contributions in raising awareness of these problems. This has enhanced support for activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and influenced official opinion. One UNICEF-supported NGO, Child Workers in Asia, publishes newsletters and pictorial booklets on the situation of working children.

Education and early childhood development

23. The World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, gave particular focus to education in the region and provided the opportunity for most countries to review their educational policies. One major outcome has been increased attention to female education. In 1990, Bangladesh approval legislation providing compulsory primary education, with free education for girls up to grade 8. In Thailand, a national plan of action has been prepared. In Pakistan, priority has been given to the basic learning needs of girls and women. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, emphasis has been placed on recruiting and training female primary school teachers.

24. Overall, primary school enrolments increased during 1990. In the Philippines, primary enrolment is now 99.5 per cent, and in Indonesia, 96 per cent. However, low female enrolment, absenteeism, high drop-out rates and poor teaching skills continue to create problems in many countries of the region. In Bangladesh, daily attendance averages only 50 per cent and even less during peak agricultural seasons. Of those children completing primary school, 10 per cent do not have basic reading and writing skills. In Myanmar, schools opened in May after a three-year disruption. Non-enrolment is estimated at 38 per cent and the drop-out rate at 80 per cent.

25. In many countries, UNICEF has supported the improvement and expansion of non-formal education. Functional literacy programmes, focusing on women and teenage girls and implemented by NGOs, are being supported in Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam. Innovative approaches to girls' non-formal education have been established in Pakistan.

26. UNICEF continues to support improvements in the quality of education through curricula development, improved teacher training and development and the publication of school textbooks and primers. During 1990, curricula were reviewed in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. In Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, new curricula will include health education, agriculture and science. Support for the production of school textbooks increased in several countries. In Cambodia, 500,000 school textbooks were printed, and in Bangladesh, UNICEF supported the production of 17 million school texts and primers. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, UNICEF assisted with low-cost book production.

27. Early childhood development activities expanded in most countries in the region, with a growing focus on an integrated, multidisciplinary approach. In Viet Nam, demand was created for the further integration of nutrition and health into formal day-care centres. In Thailand, 1,110 women and village leaders were trained in multidisciplinary approaches to child care. In Cambodia, a pilot project was established to teach young children basic literacy and numeracy skills.

External relations

28. The year 1990 was an exceptionally busy period for advocacy in the region, with the World Conference on Education for All (hosted by the Royal Thai Government), the Task Force for Child Survival at Bangkok, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children.

29. Advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child was undertaken in every country of the region, and the regional office met the strong demand for information materials on the Convention. The State of the World's Children report continued to have a strong impact and several national versions of Facts for Life were launched during the year.

30. Alliances and contacts forged with parliamentarians in previous years proved valuable in mobilizing political support for the Convention and the World Summit for Children.

31. At the country level, ministers, senior officials and community gatherings focused on child survival, protection and development. In Bangladesh, the President formed an Interministerial Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Pakistan, writers, artists, media and community leaders held meetings to mobilize support for children and the Summit. In the Philippines, the President presided over a candlelight vigil at Manila. In Thailand, the Thai National Summit, presided over by the Prime Minister, was attended by over 500 persons representing government agencies, NGOs and key public figures.

C. Regional services

32. The regional office provides a broad range of support and advisory services to the country offices in the region, including support in planning, evaluation and monitoring; programme support; communications and training; external relations; supply operations; administration, personnel and finance; and health and nutrition advisory support services. The regional office is also the focal point for inter-agency cooperation and linkages with regional institutions. These activities were elaborated in previous reports and will be made available on request to interested Executive Board members.

II. CHINA

A. Recent developments

33. The eighth five-year development plan is to be launched in 1991. Premier Li Peng, reporting to the State Council on the nation's economy in July 1990, said that the eighth five-year plan should be within the framework of a 10-year programme; sustained and steady development should be pursued within available means; and the "deepening of reform" and opening the country to the outside world should continue. Agriculture was seen as a major priority and a breakthrough in agriculture and keeping the increase of grain production in line with population growth were considered important goals. The new plan is likely to provide a balanced approach embodying elements of both central planning and market mechanisms. No public statement has been made so far about goals and strategies in the social sectors.

34. According to the decennial population census conducted in 1990, population, spurred by a second generation baby-boom, stood at 1.13 billion - 22 per cent of the world's population and 36 per cent of Asia's. The census also indicated a national illiteracy rate of 16 per cent, which amounted to 180 million illiterates over 12 years old. When further results become available, current disaggregated data on the population, including child mortality and distribution of illiteracy, will be known.

B. Programme trends

35. The past year has seen the beginning of the fourth Government of China/UNICEF programme of cooperation for the period 1990-1994, which was approved by the Executive Board in April 1989 (E/ICEF/1989/P/L.14). In some cases, the elaboration of individual project plans and decisions regarding implementation methods and mechanisms demanded major efforts from UNICEF and government counterparts. Major global advocacy events - the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Conference on Education for All and the World Summit for Children - have been the additional focus of attention and effort in the past year.

36. A total early childhood development initiative is a means of achieving government goals: improving the outcome of pregnancies; improving young child care; and improved children's education. It also builds on the child survival efforts that have been successful in China over the past decade. The major aim of the initiative is to make parents, members of the family and community partners ensure that every young child below the age of six years, especially those in poor and remote areas, has access to essential services and can participate in affordable, community-based early child care and education activities, thus reducing the present disparity between opportunities for urban and rural children.